

[Il Negligento]

19832 1

Mr. Robert [Beaudette?]

39 Barre Street

Montpelier, Vermont

Two men were drinking beer. As the cloud of smoke which engulfed them lifted it revealed the features of two middle aged men. Hank Pioardi was the larger of the two. Perhaps it was the burden of an enormous stomach which first drew your attention to him, but it was the nose with the eternal curl and the sneering upper lip which made you uncomfortably conscious of a burning resentment behind the dark eyes.

"Say, I can tell you plenty about the conditions of our country. I can tell you also that Barre will never be the city that it was forty years ago. Joe will tell you the same thing."

'Joe' Mario seldom smiled. When he did, the glint in his eye betrayed his sullen nature, and the rueful face writhed with disgust and contempt. "Yeah, maybe so," he almost muttered.
C 3 [?]

Hank then continued, "I was born in Milan. Joe here was born in Turin. Yes, these places are in the northern part. Sometimes we get along pretty good with those from the Southern part but they got nasty sometimes because they think that they know more than anyone else. I came over in [1905?] and started to work in a store here."

Joe entered into the conversation at this juncture. "And I came over from the old country in nineteen o nine. I learned to cut granite over there from my father. I was 2 eleven years old when I first started and I had to work like a goddam fool because the old man was forever getting plastered and there was nobody to support the family. When my mother died I was

Library of Congress

plenty fed up and when I got a chance to come to America I took it. Been working here in [Barre?] ever since. I'm not like this lazy sonofabitch. He never works. Just thinks nothing except about playing for the band here in [Barre?].”

“I'm not working now because I can't find work. And anyhow I worked plenty myself when I first came over. We used to work in the store in those days from seven in the morning till ten or eleven at night. Then I got a job in the shed. They made me a lumper. He's the fellow who does all the hard work around the shed. He can run all the machines and fill in at any spot when he has to. Now I'm not able to find work. And besides I've got a big family. Four girls and four boys. Seven of them are out of school. And the seven of them are working. Isn't that enough to have working in one family?”

“You have had all kinds of luck. Big family all of them working. Do you think that would happen to me. Like hell it would. My wife is always making a lot of noise about nothing and when I try to shut her up she starts throwing our mortgaged furniture at me. The big fat slob don't know enough to last her over night. And the kids. Six of them. Do you think that they work? The oldest girl had to get married because she was running around too much and finally got hooked. 3 The boys all drink. Only the youngest girl do I like. Oh, I like them all but you know it's that way. Maybe there is one you like better than the others. She graduated from high school two years ago. She goes to a Catholic College down country and it's just the place for her - because she is so good. Always thinks of my wife and me. Sends us a letter almost every other day. When she's at home she helps the woman out with all the housework and even works out to get her own spending money. Everybody likes her. Goes to church all the time but she isn't one of those hypocritical persons. She goes out with boys and to dances and has a good time but always it is clean fun with her. How I like my little Annette...”

As if anxious to change the subject Hank broke in, “Well anyhow Barre isn't the same as it was forty years ago. Why, Barre should be the richest city in the country for its size and look at it now. It's all because of those [?] that have been creeping up in this country. But

Library of Congress

about those Italian newspapers that they use to have here in Barre? They didn't have much effect upon the people. When they first came out those papers converted some of the people to their way of thinking but it wasn't soon before they saw the light and that stuff died. But it was never harmful here in Barre."

"Oh, it didn't do so much good. What the hell was all that stink that they raised if it wasn't for the stuff that they printed. If they hadn't stopped it, it might have 4 spread and ruined everybody."

"They stopped because they saw how futile it was to continue. You're all wet when you try to tell me that it didn't stop of its own accord."

"Hank continued, "And when they had strikes here the laborer and the manufacturer would have their differences and then if they were not settled when the next morning came the laborer just wouldn't go to work. You never saw any parades or any fights around then. The worker would probably go fishing and the manufacturer would probably work in his garden or just the other way around. The strike that I'm speaking of lasted until nineteen hundred and twenty-three."

Joe interrupted, "And then they got those goddam French bastards down here from Canada. The manufacturer wanted to get new blood into his business and by god he did."

Picardi went on with another phase of it, "And those guys that did believe in anarchism and communism were a funny lot. I knew a lot of them well. I didn't know them as well as I do some people but I knew them pretty well and let me tell you they were goddam queer. Why you take that [Galleanni?]. He's [Fussolini's?] right hand man now. He was nothing but a shyster lawyer. He and a bunch of fellows came over from the old country and settled in different parts of the country where there were Italian colonies. As it happened he came to Barre. To meet him on the street you'd think that he was nothing more than a grease monkey. But he was really a brilliant man. He would give a talk in some part of the town to a group of Italians and convert a few of them to his way of thinking and then pass the hat

Library of Congress

around. He would probably collect around forty dollars and then wait till that was gone and then he would give another talk and that was the way he lived. Bundi did the same thing. Then all of a sudden he left the country and ended up in London. He eventually died there. Vacherelli was the same kind of a fellow. He ended up in Paris.”

Mario looked up from his beer and gave his version. “All in all those fellows didn't do much harm here but if the bastards had ever got a foothold on the place it would have been too bad. And that's what the matter with our government right now. Nothing but a bunch of thick headed fools making bigger fools out of people like us. If they would only throw out those damn Jews. They're the cause of all the trouble that you find in every country and they're going to be the cause of a revolution in our own country. Wait and see!”

Hank had his theory, “The trouble is that all these [?] [emanate?] right from Washington. Those fellows have been monkeying around with this government so damn long that it is getting serious. Franklin Roosevelt is the worst one of them all. Spending and spending till our country is practically bled of its wealth. I've got nothing against him personally, it's just against his views. Why, they're trying to bring up our younger generation so that they will be Americans and what the hell has happened? Our worst riffraff is found right 6 here in our Americanized youth. And where do you think that all this anarchism comes from? You can't tell me that it comes from the working man. No, sir! You give the common working man a decent week's pay and he is the most contented man in the world.”

Joe offered a solution for the origination of the isms. “Where all these isms come from is from your educated college graduates. Either they develop these radical ideas themselves or else the professors teach it to them in college and some of the students may have believed in them and gone out and preached them to others. That's the way it began. But there were never any extreme radicals in Barre. There may have been a few. Of course, that's the case with a few college students. I couldn't honestly say that every college

Library of Congress

student believes these crazy ideas or is even taught then. No, I can't say that because I know that it isn't true in every case. Now you take my Annette..."